Introduction to Digital Libraries

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Producing a paperback capable of reaching pre-course reading lists is an unashamedly worthy pursuit.   All parties concerned benefit. The publisher benefits from the ferocious demand, the academic bookseller rubs it's proverbial hands with glee as it experiences sales not dissimilar to that of a Harry Potter buying frenzy, and the author secures further academic kudos.   More importantly, the student has in his or her possession the sure foundation of scholarly success: a handbook, of sorts, capable of shepherding them safely through those darkest corridors of university education and on to academic fruition. For those students studying information and library science, and in particular digital librarianship, such texts have been few and far between. *The Electronic Library* by Jennifer Rowley is arguably the only book to have challenged this anomaly with any degree of success and it remains a principal staple of many reading lists. However, neither current nor comprehensive, the passing of time has rendered the utility of Rowley's book to nominal proportions. The Chowdhury duo attempt to redress this student grievance and deliver *Introduction to Digital Libraries*, the remit of which is to provide 'a holistic view of the new digital library scene' and offer a comprehensive discussion of the current digital library design, development and management issues.

Beginning with the introductory (and now customary) chapter on defining the digital library phenomenon, Chowdhury and Chowdhury usher the reader through 15 chapters based on fundamental digital library topics such as digital library research, information organisation and retrieval, collection management, preservation, digitisation, and so forth, and conclude with a discussion of future digital library trends.   Such a gargantuan voyage encompasses not just the technical matters of design, architecture and management, but also the implications of digital library development in legal and socio-economic terms, and those service side matters that are forever neglected. Don't expect to be electrified with purple prose or radical intellect; this is, after all, an introduction. Rather, allow yourself to be taken by the hand as the reader is treated to

examples and illustrations, appropriately deployed throughout, drawn from digital libraries or research projects the world over, but mainly the UK and USA.

A staggering amount of literature and research has been published on digital libraries since the trend emerged in the early 1990s and condensing this magnitude of material into a manageable textbook is no mean feat, especially when one considers that the authors have produced entire books for Facet concerning some of the aforementioned topics. Gobinda G Chowdhury is a Senior Lecturer and Sudatta Chowdhury a Researcher, both in the Department of Computer and Information Sciences at the University of Strathclyde. Their command of digital library issues is not only manifest in their experience in the field, but their ability to strike a balance between what the student needs to know and what they should know. Whilst a book that was a little less reductionist and one that gives a greater credence to cataloguing and metadata would be wholly welcome, such minor indiscretions can be forgiven when one considers the proposed readership. Yet the readership need not only be students. Practitioners wishing to acquaint themselves with recent digital library developments or disaffected experts needing reassurance that there is a purpose to their madness could do far worse than digesting a copy.   Though marginally pricey for the student, few are likely to feel swindled at purchasing a new best friend.